

Report of the Proceedings of the 39th Annual Conference held at Lyabeth Hall, Oxford Street, W., on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, 23rd, 24th and 25th April, 1943.

FIRST DAY.

The General Secretary called the Conference to order at 11.20 a.m.

Chairman - W. Waters.
Vice-Chairman - E. Lake.
Tellers - Heolas, Jones, Offord and Reginald.

REPORT OF STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE: The Standing Orders Committee reported that there were present 23 Delegates representing 10 Branches.
Resolution - R.W. McLaughlin (S.W.London) and Rabin (Marylebone) "That the report of the Standing Orders Committee be adopted" Agd.
The Standing Orders Committee further reported that as Islington Branch had been formed less than six months their Delegates could sit only with the permission of the Conference.
Resolution - McDowell (Lewisham) and Howard (Bloomsbury) "That the Islington Delegates be allowed to sit" Cd. 19-0.

REPORT OF THE 39th EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

LAY-OUT OF AGENDA.

Resolution - R.W. McLaughlin and Lawlor (S.W.London) "That this Conference endorses the new form of Agenda and asks the E.C. to continue with this lay-out in the future." Cd. 21-C.

E.C. MEETINGS.

No action.

E.C. ATTENDANCES.

No action.

BRANCHES AND MEMBERSHIP.

- (a) Expulsions. No action.
- (b) Dundee Branch. No action.
- (c) Tooting. No action.
- (d) Islington Branch. No action.
- (e) Central Branch. No action.

(f) Report of Central Organiser. The Central Organiser was asked by Islington Branch to explain his failure to contact known groups of sympathisers outside London with a view to forming new branches. The General Secretary replied that this work was in fact being carried out by the Central Branch Secretary who was in the best position to deal with it and that he hoped to be able to report to the E.C. shortly.
Resolution - Lawlor and R.W. McLaughlin (S.W.London) "That this Conference urges the Central Organiser to maintain closer personal contact with Branches" Cd. 19-0.

Resolution - Wakelinz and Willis (Islington) "That this Conference expresses its disapproval of the Central Organiser's report in that it does not report the activities of the Central Organiser but is a resume of the Party's activities given in the general report" Lost 6-12.

PROPAGANDA.

- (a) 1942 Conference Resolutions on Debates and Mass Meetings.
Resolution - R.W. McLaughlin and Lawlor (S.W.London) "That this Conference urges the E.C. to confine Mass Meetings to either a general statement of the Socialist case by several speakers, or one meeting, one subject" Lost 7-22.
- (b) 1942 Delegate Meeting Resolution on Mid-day Indoor Meetings. No action.
- (c) Propaganda Statistics. No action.

REPORT OF STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE: The Standing Orders Committee reported that there were now present 38 Delegates representing 16 Branches.

Resolution - R.W. McLaughlin (S.W.London) and Rabin (Marylebone) "That the report be adopted" Agd.

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PROPAGANDA (Cont.)

(d) 1942 Conference Resolution on Method of Appointment of Full-Time Propagandist. The General Secretary reported to Conference that when the E.C. received the report of their sub-committee set up to deal with the question, the E.C. had in fact decided to place on the Preliminary Agenda the Resolution carried by the 1942 Conference so that Branches might instruct their Delegates thereon. Owing to the change in the Secretaryship an oversight had occurred and the Resolution was not placed on the Agenda.

Resolution - Rabin and Goldman (Marylebone) "That the whole question should be referred back to the E.C. and that they arrange for an instructed vote, either at the next Delegate Meeting or by a Party Poll on the question: 'Shall Paid Party Workers be appointed by the E.C.?'"

Amendment - R.W. McLaughlin and R. McLaughlin (S.W. London) "That this Conference, having considered the report of the E.C. sub-committee on the appointment of paid propagandists, recommends that such appointments be open to nomination by Branches, the nominees to be examined by an examining committee appointed by the E.C., and those satisfying the committee of their ability, to go to a Party Poll" Lost 12-24.

Amendment - Willis and Wakeling (Islington) "That this Conference is of the opinion that the method of appointment to paid positions in the Party should be by means of nominations from the Branches and appointment by the E.C." Lost 11-14.

Amendment - Deane and Howard (Bloomsbury) "That this Conference recommends that all full-time paid propagandists should be nominated by the Branches or the E.C. but should be appointed by the E.C."

Lost 16-17.

Amendment - Curtis and Hampson (Chiswick) "That the matter of the appointment of Full-Time Paid Propagandists be left in the hands of the E.C." Cd. 15-11. Sub. Res. Cd. 18-7.

RESOLUTION (A) - Bloomsbury Branch. "That the E.C. be instructed to get to work immediately on the task of preparing to meet the problems of the post-war period when excellent propaganda prospects will open up for the Party." In support of the Resolution it was stated that after the war there would be a considerable field for our propaganda and that we should train a substantial number of speakers, writers, etc. to deal with the situation. Such training could be furthered by the preparation of skeleton lectures which could be made available by the E.C. for use under such conditions. The E.C. should prepare a body of efficient members large enough to ensure that our propaganda could be spread all over the country. A further suggestion was that the E.C. should make efforts to increase the interest of Branch Meetings. The Resolution was opposed on the grounds that the work should be carried out by Branches and not by the E.C. who were already overloaded with work and further that it was doubtful whether centralisation of such activity would be successful.

The Resolution was Carried 37-7.

RESOLUTION (E) - Hackney Branch. "That the E.C. ruling that no outdoor propaganda meeting shall be held without the presence of an official Party speaker be rescinded."

and

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (1) - Chiswick Branch. "The advisability of permitting outdoor meetings without an official speaker but with a Chairman approved by the Propaganda Committee."

In support of the Resolution it was claimed that Branches were the best judges of speakers suitable to take charge of propaganda meetings as was the case before the war. It was further stated that the attitude of the authorities was to ignore small organisations and that difficulties were not likely to arise through the use of inexperienced speakers.

In opposition it was urged that the only solution of the difficulty was to develop competent speakers and it was not correct that Branches were the best judges of propagandists for use under the present conditions.

The Resolution was Lost 11-28.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (ii) - Marylebone Branch. "That in view of the changed situation, the Party should revert to the peace-time procedure of extending its outdoor activities, and encouraging new speakers to take the platform as widely as possible."

In support of this item it was stated that conditions had now changed sufficiently for propaganda to be extended and new speakers placed on the platform. It was also claimed that the situation during the war had never been so difficult as the E.C. imagined. In any case we should be prepared to face a certain amount of difficulty in order to get our propaganda across.

In opposition it was stated that conditions were in fact as difficult now as at any time during the war and that experience showed that there was a need to exercise extreme care. An example was given of the experiences in this direction of another journal.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (iii) - Bloomsbury Branch. "Is Criticism of other organisations being conducted in the most useful way?". The question was raised whether Party Propagandists were adopting an iconoclastic attitude and spending too much time in merely attacking other organisations without recognising that most of them were sincerely supported by large numbers of workers. Party speakers and members generally should endeavour to avoid being unnecessarily antagonistic to members of other organisations. The positive case for Socialism should first be put and questions should be awaited before dealing with other organisations. On the other hand it could be said that criticism of other organisations was in fact positive propaganda of great value as was shown by the success which attended debates.

REPORT OF STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE: The Standing Orders Committee reported that there were now present 39 Delegates representing 16 Branches.

Resolution - Millen and Howard (Bloomsbury) "That the report be adopted" Agd.

PROPAGANDA (Cont.)

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (iv) - S.W. London Branch. "Is the time opportune for the continuance of the paid Party Propagandist?"

S.W. London Delegates stated that their Branch did not oppose the principal of having a paid propagandist but they questioned whether at this particular time the expenditure was justified. In their view it would be preferable for the money to be spent on the production of more literature.

In opposition it was claimed that the results achieved completely justified the continuance of the scheme and that even if additional literature were produced it would still be necessary to have the services of a paid propagandist to further its distribution.

Resolution - Millen and Howard (Bloomsbury) "That this Conference supports the continuance of a paid propagandist" Cd. 35-0.

Resolution - Lawlor and Austin (S.W. London) "That the Party should devote far more attention to current news items and establish local discussion groups to present the Socialist interpretation of current events" Cd. 7-4.

EDUCATION.

(a) Classes.

Resolution - Lawlor and Austin (S.W. London) "That the classes held by the Party should be confined to the fundamentals of Socialism, rather than public speaking and writing, which can be obtained at almost all L.C.C. Institutes and evening classes" Lost 4-29.

In support of the Resolution it was stated that excellent facilities were provided by outside educational institutions at a small cost for training in the essentials of speaking and writing and that the Party would be wasting its time if it gave tuition along such lines. The main task of classes should be to teach the fundamentals of Socialism. A member of the Writers' Class told the Conference that he had attended both the Writers' and Speakers' Classes and that the ground covered was essential to the training of both speakers and writers. The Resolution was a defeatist one and cast an unnecessary reflection on those responsible for running the classes. Fundamental questions of

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Socialism were at all times being dealt with at the Classes. A member of the Editorial Committee stated that the Writers' Class proved itself exceedingly valuable and that as a result it should be possible to build up a body of reliable writers.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (v) - Dagenham & Romford Branch. "The setting up of a Socialist research department." It was urged that it would be very useful if those members who had special facilities for obtaining useful information, newspaper cuttings, etc. could pool their resources and make the information available to other members for use at meetings.

A member of the Editorial Committee stated that while a research department would ultimately be necessary its function should not be that of distributing "potted" speeches to Party Speakers which was an undesirable practice. It should be a research department in the real sense of the word but it could not be organised until there were members available with the means and time at their disposal. For the moment efforts should be made to increase the Library with suitable reference works etc.

(b) Library. The Chairman read a report presented by the present Librarians to the 40th E.C. in which it was recommended that in view of the loss recently of certain valuable books a section of the Library should be set apart for reference purposes only.

Resolution - Deane and Gilmac (Bloomsbury) "That this Conference recommends in view of the present difficulties in obtaining books the Library be for the time being a Reference Library only and that books may only be taken away with the special permission of the E.C."

Cd. 22-4.

GREETINGS FROM PARTIES ABROAD: At this juncture the Chairman read to the Conference messages of greeting that had been received from the S.F.N.Z. and the W.S.P. of the U.S.A.

Resolution - Hampson (Chiswick) and Howard (Bloomsbury) "On the occasion of its 39th Conference the S.F.G.B. sends fraternal greetings to its Companion Parties abroad" Cd. unan.

LITERATURE.

RESOLUTION (D) - Hackney Branch. "That the ban on 'War and the Working-Class' be lifted and the pamphlet be re-printed."

AMENDMENT - Chiswick Branch. "That the E.C. consider the possibilities of removing the ban on 'War and the Working-Class'." It was stated that without a very close knowledge of the present conditions it would be unwise for Conference to come to a decision on such a question. In matters of this character it would be better for a decision to be made by the E.C.

The Amendment was Carried 21-19, and as a Sub-Res. 21-19.

RESOLUTION (F) - Lewisham Branch. "That a committee be set up to examine present and future post-war reconstruction schemes with a view to publication of pamphlets or S.S. articles."

In support of the Resolution it was pointed out that the Party should be ready with pamphlets and S.S. articles immediately the war was over dealing with the various schemes for reconstruction that would be current and that preparation of such material should be undertaken immediately and by others than the Editorial Committee who were already overburdened with work.

A member of the Editorial Committee expressed the view that the Party should not wait until the cessation of hostilities before publishing such material but that as in the past opportunity should be taken to publish pamphlets on topical items whenever possible. Three such penny pamphlets had in fact been published during the last few years. The preoccupation of the Editorial Committee with the S.S. arose owing to the shortage of writers able to guarantee a steady supply of articles but there were signs that this difficulty was getting less.

The Resolution was Lost 18-18.

RESOLUTION (G) - Southend Branch. "That a standardised cover be adopted for all Party pamphlets so that they are easily identified."

AMENDMENT - Southend Branch. "Add after 'identified' ... 'this to include the emblem of the Party, the same size as that on the cover of the Party's ...'"

In support of the Resolution it was claimed that with the exception of the most recent pamphlet, cover designs had not been suitable and that the E.C. should establish a suitable cover design for all future pamphlets.

Resolution - Clark and Stovold (Paddington) "That the vote be taken" Lost 11-21.

In opposition it was stated that past cover designs had generally been considered good and that in any case even if it were decided to standardise a cover future Conferences and/or E.C.s would undoubtedly change it.

A protest was raised against Branches placing items of minor importance on the Agenda which could quite well be dealt with directly by the E.C.

The Amendment was Lost 13-25. The Resolution was Lost 7-23.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (xiv) - Chiswick Branch. "That the E.C. consider the possibilities of translating Party Works into foreign languages." The need was stressed for having Socialist literature available after the war for use abroad to meet a need that it was felt would arise. Further it was pointed out that there were large numbers of refugees at present in this country to whom Socialist literature in their own languages should be made available. A member of the Editorial Committee stated that from time to time material had been translated into French, German and Esperanto.

(a) Party Publications (Editorial).

Resolution - Millen and Gilmac (Bloomsbury) "That this Conference recommends that a larger type be employed for the printing of the S.S." Lost 7-23.

Resolution - R. McLaughlin and Lawlor (S.W. London) "That the E.C. be recommended to ask the Editorial Committee to allocate at least one page in each issue of the S.S. to 'answers to correspondents'." Lost 13-18.

(b) Party Publications (Distribution). No action.

(c) Non-Party Publications. No action.

THE FIRST DAY'S PROCEEDINGS TERMINATED AT 6.5 P.M.

SECOND DAY.

The Conference resumed at 11.20 a.m.

FINANCE.

(a) Statement of Accounts.

Resolution - Stovold and McLean (Paddington) "That this Conference recommends that the Statement of Accounts be presented in a more simplified form designed to give more clarity and less attention to detail" Lost 4-20.

On behalf of the Resolution it was said that it was difficult to ascertain the expense incurred and the income received under the various headings such as Propaganda, Literature, etc. Certain items could also be lumped together. The General Secretary explained that the present form of Accounts was in accordance with the wishes of the last Conference and was a simple method of presenting the various items of income and expenditure.

(b) Appeals for Funds.

Resolution - Millen and Whale (Bloomsbury) "That this Conference recommends that in future the Party shall not use draws as a means of raising money" Cd 18-0.

In support of the Resolution it was stated that the Party should rely on financial assistance from members and sympathisers and not on those who were not interested in Socialism but would purchase draw tickets purely for speculative purposes. Further that the results achieved did not merit the time and trouble incurred by members in selling tickets.

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General Secretary.

CONFERENCE HELD AT
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H.O. PREMISES.

- (a) 1942 Conference Resolution on Paid Head Office Assistant.
RESOLUTION (I) - Southend Branch. "That a full-time assistant be engaged at Head Office to deal with correspondence and Party business."

and
ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (vi) - Palmers Green and Southend Branches. "appointment of a full-time paid General Secretary."

It was claimed that the organisation of the Party could be considerably improved by the employment of a full-time paid Head Office assistant.

On the other hand views were expressed that there was no need at the moment for such a position as the work was being carried out satisfactorily but that the Party would be able to take such a step should the need arise. Conference were asked to bear in mind the possibility at some future date a paid General Secretary and Organiser to co-ordinate Party activities. Further, that suggestions for the improvement of organisation should be submitted to the 1942 Conference Committee.

The Resolution was Lost 4-31.

Resolution - Steele and Shaw (Palmers Green) "That this Conference recommends the E.C. to consider the possibility of appointing a full-time paid General Secretary" Lost 4-30.

- (b) 1942 Delegate Meeting Resolution on Type of Premises.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (xiii) - Southend Branch. "That the E.C. be instructed to secure Head Office premises in a less expensive part of London." No action.

- (c) Efforts to obtain new H.O. Premises. No action.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES.

- (a) 1942 Delegate Meeting Resolution on arrangements for Social Activities. No action.
(b) Socials. No action.

OTHER MATTERS ARISING FROM CONFERENCE AND DELEGATE MEETING 1942.

- (a) 1942 Delegate Meeting Resolution on sending of matter to the Press.
No action.

- (b) Paid Members' Status.

RESOLUTION (B) - Glasgow Branch. "That the 1941 E.C. ruling that full-time paid propagandists are ineligible to serve on the Propaganda Committee or as Propaganda Secretary be rescinded."

AMENDMENT - Dagenham Branch. "That the ruling read that full-time paid propagandists are ineligible to serve on the Propaganda Committee but eligible to serve as Propaganda Secretary."

The general question of the status of paid members was discussed.

It was stated that the basis of the membership was that of common relationship and that the Party would be able to control its members whether paid or unpaid. There was no reason to suppose that the outlook of paid members would deteriorate just because they were paid and that no member should be excluded from participating in the full activities of the Party. The question should not be considered from a personal point of view but as one of principle. If the present policy were persisted in it would lead to a complete cleavage between paid and unpaid members and would give point to the criticisms made by non-members that as the S.P.G.B. develops it would have the same leadership problems as other organisations. In the event of paid members serving on the E.C. it would be reasonable to presume that they would not partake in discussion where their own personal interests were involved. Should abuses arise they could quite easily be dealt with at the time.

In opposition to these views it was urged that paid members should not be in a position to make decisions affecting their own personal interests nor should they supervise their own work. However much it was desirable to eliminate the relationship of employer and employee

it was not in fact possible to do so. Members of the Party were already prevented from undertaking certain activities - E.C. members could not serve as Delegates at Conferences where their work is under review, etc. The possibility must be faced that a large proportion of the E.C. being composed of paid members. Questions of personal interest are likely to influence decisions of such members. We must legislate now to avoid such contingencies and not wait until the trouble arose.

Amendment Lost 4-41.

The Resolution was Carried 26-18.

REPORT OF STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE. The Standing Orders Committee reported that there were present 36 Delegates representing 16 Branches. Resolution - Howard (Bloomsbury) and Clark (Paddington) "That the report be adopted" And.

OTHER MATTERS ARISING FROM CONFERENCE AND DELEGATE MEETING 1942 (Cont.)

(c) 1942 Conference Committee.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (viii) - Glasgow Branch. "Ways and means of improving the party machine and simplifying branch procedure." Resolution - Deane and Howard (Bloomsbury) "That the two reports of the 1942 Conference Committee and 'Item for Discussion (viii)' be discussed at a Party Meeting to be called at a future date" Cd. 24-8.

STATEMENT ON WAR.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (x) - Manchester Branch. "The Party's attitude to war."

Manchester Branch Delegate complained at the delay in submitting the Statement to Branches and claimed that the E.C. should have accepted at once the draft when submitted by the Editorial Committee and forwarded it to Branches for their examination. The General Secretary replied that there had been no avoidable delay and that the E.C. were not prepared to issue to Branches reports from their sub-committees without the E.C.'s prior consideration.

Resolution - Maertens (Manchester) and R.W. McLaughlin (S.W. London) "That the E.C. ask Branches for written criticisms of the Statement on War to be submitted back to all Branches with a view to discussion at a special Party Meeting or Conference"

Amendment - Stovold and Clark (Paddington) "That discussion on the Statement on War be deferred until the next Delegate Meeting"

Resolution - Lees (Manchester) and Curtis (Chiswick) "That the vote be taken" Cd. 30-0.

The Amendment was Lost 8-24.

Amendment - Andrews and Bowie (Southend) "Delete ... 'Party Meeting or' " Lost 6-22.

Amendment - Crisp and Kerr (West Ham) "Delete ... 'a special Party Meeting or Conference' and insert ... 'the next Delegate Meeting or a Special Conference'"

Resolution - Hale (Bloomsbury) and Clark (Paddington) "That the vote be taken" Cd. 28-1.

The Amendment was then Lost 10-12.

The Resolution was Carried 32-2.

AMENDMENTS TO RULE.

Glasgow Branch. Rule 2 line 1. "Delete '3s' and insert '6d'" Lost 11-35.

Southend Branch. Rule 2 line 1. "Delete '3d' and insert '4d'" Lost 13-25.

Glasgow Branch. Rule 9 line 2. "Delete 'twopence' and insert 'fourpence'." Lost 8-34.

Falmers Green Amendment. "Delete 'fourpence' and insert 'threepence'." Lost 9-22.

Heckney Branch Amendment. "And add after 'Rule 2' in line 3 ... 'any branch having 12 or fewer members at the end of the previous quarter to be excused from paying dues stamps, and shall not be penalized therefor'." Lost 2-44.

Glasgow Branch. Rule 12 lines 3, 4, 5 and 6. "Delete fourth sentence and insert ... 'A member of less than six months standing shall not be eligible for candidature'." Lost 23-23.

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- Southend Branch. Rule 13 line 2. "Delete '7' and insert '9'." Lost 12-13.
- Marylebone Branch. Rule 15 line 2. "Delete 'quarter' and insert 'year'." Cd. 26-17.
- Marylebone Branch. Rule 20 line 3. "Insert after 'Branches' ... 'shall include a Financial Statement for the half-year'." Cd. 22-20.
- Southend Branch. Rule 20 lines 5 and 6. "Delete all of third paragraph and insert ... 'On the demand of any Delegate a card vote must be taken. The Delegates then present to record only the votes cast 'for' and 'against' at their summons meeting'." Lost 15-27.
- Southend Branch. Rule 22. "Southend Branch's Amendment to Rule 20 be inserted between paragraphs 2 and 3 of Rule 22." Lost 12-30.
- Marylebone Branch. Rule 22 line 4. "Insert after 'Conference' ... 'Full-time Paid Party Officials and those holding full-time Paid Party positions shall not be eligible to sit as Delegates'." Lost 11-35.
- Marylebone Branch. Rule 23 line 2. "Insert after 'shall' ... 'submit a report for the previous year, and ...'." Cd. 21-17.
- Bloomsbury Branch. Rule 33 line 5. "Delete 'refer full particulars to all branches' and insert ... 'submit particulars of the charge'." Cd. 26-18.
- Paddington Branch Amendment. "Add after 'charge' ... 'to all branches'." Sub. Res. Cd. 23-22.
- Hackney Branch. New Rule. "No member of the E.C. shall be allowed on any sub-committee." Lost 2-41.
- Hackney Branch. New Rule. "All members of sub-committees shall be subject to nomination and election in the same manner as Party Officials." Lost 2-42.

PUBLICITY.

(a) Financial Allocation. No action.

(b) Advertising.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (xx) - Chiswick Branch. "That a substantial increase in allocation of funds be granted to the Publicity Committee in connection with their work."

In support of the item it was claimed that valuable work had already been done in advertising the Party's literature and that it brought into the range of the Party many workers who could not be reached by any other means. A Manchester Delegate stated that his Branch were in touch with sympathisers whose knowledge of the Party had been gained by national advertising. The scope of the Publicity Committee's work should be extended to include advertising meetings etc. Propaganda efforts should be allied with publicity campaigns. The value of press notices of meetings was questioned.

Resolution - Maertens (Manchester) and R.W. McLaughlin (S.W. London)

"That a substantial increase in allocation of funds be granted to the Publicity Committee in connection with their work and the scope of their activities be extended" Cd. 30-7.

THE SECOND DAY'S PROCEEDINGS TERMINATED AT 6.5 P.M.

T H I R D D A Y.

The Conference resumed at 11.25 a.m.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION.

(vii) - Executive Committee, for Comrade Iles. "That this Conference is of the opinion that all sympathisers of the Party should be encouraged to form local groups for the purpose of systematically studying the implications of the Object and Declaration of Principles, such understanding resulting therefrom being the essentially desirable qualification for membership of a Socialist organisation."

The General Secretary read a letter from Comrade Iles suggesting that our propaganda in the past had to a certain extent been dissipated and that it should now be more concentrated in winning sympathisers and membership of the Party by means of the formation of study groups to be called "Friends of Socialism". The S.S. should devote a regular column to advertising such groups. The Central Branch Secretary stated that a certain amount of preliminary work in forming provincial members into groups was already being carried out.

Resolution - R. McLaughlin and R.W. McLaughlin (S.W. London) "That this matter be referred to the 1942 Conference Committee and Branches be asked to submit their views on this question to that Committee".

Amendment - Lawrence and Deane (Bloomsbury) "That this Conference recommends that the Central Organiser, Central Branch Secretary and the General Secretary be requested to put this idea into operation. Cd. 30-7.

Sub. Res. Cd. 30-7.

A member of the 1942 Conference Committee in support of the Resolution stated that his Committee already had in mind tentative proposals along the lines suggested by Comrade Iles. For the amendment it was claimed that as a certain amount of work had already been undertaken the Officials concerned should continue. Other points were that among the large membership of Central Branch there should be some members who would be willing to do spadework in establishing such groups. The problem was not a difficult one and the main need was to find active and enthusiastic members in provincial centres as organisers.

PARTIES ABROAD.

- (a) 1942 Delegate Meeting Resolution on Correspondence with Members of Companion Parties. No action.
- (b) International Statement. The Overseas Secretary stated in reply to a question that the W.S.F. had rejected the proposed International Statement on the grounds that it was not sufficiently lively and that its quotations were drawn largely from English sources. The material of the Statement was mainly on post-war reconstruction. A member of the Editorial Committee said that the Statement was in a form requested by the W.S.F.
- (c) Contact with Companion Parties.
Resolution - R.W. McLaughlin and Lawlor (S.W. London) "That the E.C. be asked to consider the advisability of inserting a small panel in the S.S. giving the designations and addresses of Companion Parties abroad, space permitting"
Resolution - Walker (S.W. London) and Judd (Islington) "That the question be put" Cd. 21-0.
The Resolution was then Carried 20-2.

In reply to a further question the Overseas Secretary informed the Conference that 15 Public Libraries had so far accepted the "Western Socialist" and that a considerable number of further acceptances were expected.

This concluded the consideration of the Report of the 39th E.C.

Resolution - R.W. McLaughlin (S.W. London) and Lawrence (Bloomsbury) "That the Report of the 39th E.C. be adopted" Cd. unan.

RESOLUTIONS.

- (C) - Hackney Branch. "That the E.C. be asked to draw up a list of questions to be submitted to applicants for membership of the Party."
- ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (ix) - S.W. London Branch. "That the Branches be asked to appoint a committee of three to examine applicants for membership and to advise the branches as to their suitability."

In support of the Resolution it was claimed that Branches sometimes asked applicants too complex questions and that a standard set of questions would assist in avoiding this situation.

In opposition it was suggested that a set form of questions might reveal a superficial knowledge of the Party's case but not give a

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correct picture of an applicant's understanding. Another suggestion was that the best method would be for Branches to set up special committees to deal with applicants in the first instance. The Resolution was Lost 4-42.

Resolution - R.W. McLaughlin and Lawlor (S.W. London) "That each Branch be asked to appoint a committee of three to examine applicants for membership and to advise the Branch as to their suitability" Lost 11-28.

(H) - Southend Branch. "That no member of the Party can be a member of the Armed Forces."

In support of the Resolution it was urged that the Party did in fact tend to agree with this proposition in view of the special consideration given to applications from members of the Armed Forces and the consideration of those cases where members joined the Armed Forces. While it was true that all members of the Working-Class were to some extent engaged in furthering the prosecution of the war, the Armed Forces were the spearhead of the movement and Socialists should not in theory oppose the war and in practice do the opposite. The Armed Forces are the bodyguard of the Capitalist Class the Socialists should not form a part of that bodyguard. It is hypocritical for Socialists to oppose war but at the same time to have their members in the Armed Forces. Members should be prepared to undergo hardships in defence of their principles although organisations existed to alleviate such hardships.

Another view was that while we cannot prevent members being conscripted into the Armed Forces we should not permit membership to be retained in the case of those volunteering. In opposition to the Resolution it was stated that the Party could not lay down a line of conduct for its members in connection with the Armed Forces without a complete knowledge of the circumstances surrounding each case. Nor should members criticise the actions of others less fortunately placed than themselves. When the question of volunteering was dealt with by the Party in the last war it was understood that such volunteering meant that the member had political reasons for volunteering which were opposed to the Socialist case. Martyrdom was not in the interests of either the member or the Party. The Resolution if carried would make the Party an illegal organisation. Another view in support of the Resolution was that it was not true to say that members could not avoid being drawn into the Armed Forces - they have a choice. The position might arise in which hostilities broke out with countries in which there were Companion Parties of the S.F.G.B.

In opposition to the Resolution it was urged that the Party should not try to make a cleavage between the Workers in and out of uniform. To be logical we must extend such a principle to exclude munition workers etc. from the Party. The basis upon which the Party should judge the question is whether the presence of Party members in the Armed Forces embarrasses the Party.

Resolution - Lawrence (Bloomsbury) and Clark (Paddington) "That the question be put" Cd. 21-5.

The Resolution was then Lost 5-38.

REPORT OF THE STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE. The Standing Orders Committee reported that there were present 40 Delegates representing 16 Branches.

Resolution - Howard and Millen (Bloomsbury) "That the report be adopted" Agd.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION.

- (xv) - Bloomsbury Branch. "Advisability of the Party putting forward a candidate at the first General Election after the war."
(xvi) - Dagenham & Romford Branch. "Advisability of running candidates at Parliamentary By-Elections."
(xvii) - Paddington Branch. "Shall propaganda be commenced forthwith in the area for which a prospective candidate for parliament has been found, for the General Election following the war?"

It was claimed that our failure to put forward Parliamentary candidates made it difficult to persuade non-members that we were in fact a

Political Party and this should be remedied. The putting forward of a Parliamentary candidate would provide excellent publicity and would be received with enthusiasm by the membership and give a great stimulus to Party activities generally. While at any time the Party could not guarantee that its candidates would not be supported by Socialists, our propaganda would be directed to preventing non-Socialists supporting our candidates. The efforts put in at East Ham had not been wasted and large numbers of workers there were still in sympathy with the Party. There is no reason to suppose that the deposit would be lost. It was pointed out that the Party were in fact still bound by a previous Conference decision to put forward a candidate at the next General Election. Our propaganda efforts should be concentrated rather than dispersed over a wide area. After the war it appears that we shall have an organisation more capable of handling the situation than was the case in 1918.

Fighting By-Elections was supported on the grounds that it will enable the Party to ascertain the amount of support there was at the present time and a General Election might not occur for a considerable time after the war. The publicity value of a By-Election would be greater than that of a General Election.

In opposition to the proposals it was claimed that a Socialist candidate either now or immediately after the war would receive non-Socialist votes. It would not be good policy to concentrate in the one area at the expense of others. The publicity received might be unfavourable rather than favourable. Recent experience showed that those candidates who received support were those who claimed that their policies would assist in the more efficient prosecution of the war. It was noted that small organisations received very little publicity as a result of Parliamentary campaigns. A considerable amount of energy had been wasted at East Ham leading to members becoming discouraged.

Resolution - Stovold and Clark (Paddington) "That this Conference recommends that a candidate be put up at the first post-war General Election, in a constituency to be decided by the E.C." Cd. 28-9.

Resolution - Gilmac and Millen (Bloomsbury) "That all possible propaganda be organised in the area which is chosen as a constituency or in the present constituency if its choice is reaffirmed." Cd. 25-8.

(xviii) - Bloomsbury Branch. "The Party Attitude towards Trade Unions."

(xix) - S.W. London Branch. "That this Conference recommends the E.C. to call a Party Conference to discuss the Party's attitude to the Trade Unions and the members adherence to it."

It was alleged that there is a serious difference in the Party on the Trade Union issue and that Party speakers were putting the case incorrectly. Not all members of the Party who could be members of Trade Unions were members of Trade Unions and the Party should take steps to remedy this situation.

In opposition it was claimed that there was no evidence that such a difference of opinion existed nor that members did not join their appropriate Trade Unions.

In order to clear up the situation a Special Conference should be held.

Resolution - Walker and R.W. McLaughlin (S.W. London) "That this Conference recommends the E.C. to call a Party Conference to discuss the Party's attitude to the Trade Unions and the members adherence to it"

Lost 18-19.

(xi) - S.W. London Branch. "That a period be set aside at the end of each days procedure at each Annual Conference to enable provincial members who so desire to have an opportunity of addressing the Party Delegates."

(xii) - S.W. London Branch. "That a clause be introduced into the Party's model standing orders to permit a vote of direction being taken when the Chairman's ruling is challenged as follows: 'The Chairman may and shall by motion accept the direction of members assembled where his ruling has been questioned'."

Resolution - Lawrence and Howard (Bloomsbury) "That consideration of 'Items for Discussion' (xi) and (xii) be deferred until the next Delegate Meeting" Cd. 34-3.

THE CONFERENCE TERMINATED AT 6 P.M. (Signed) C. C. Groves,
General Secretary.

- (xiii) That the E.C. be instructed to secure Head Office premises in a less expensive part of London. (Southend Branch)
- (xiv) That the E.C. consider the possibilities of translating Party Works into foreign languages. (Chiswick Branch)
- (xv) Advisability of the Party putting forward a candidate at the first General Election after the war. (Bloomsbury Branch)
- (xvi) Advisability of running candidates at Parliamentary By-Elections. (Dagenham & Romford Branch)
- (xvii) Shall propaganda be commenced forthwith in the area for which a prospective candidate for parliament has been found, for the General Election following the war?
(Paddington Branch)
- (xviii) The Party Attitude towards Trade Unions. (Bloomsbury Branch)
- (xix) That this Conference recommends the E.C. to call a Party Conference to discuss the Party's attitude to the Trade Unions and the members adherence to it. (S.W. London Branch)
- (xx) That a substantial increase in allocation of funds be granted to the Publicity Committee in connection with their work. (Chiswick Branch)

OFFICIALS AND COMMITTEES APPOINTED BY THE 39th E.C.

OFFICIALS:- Central Branch Secretary George.
Classes Organiser Waite.
Librarians Hampson & Wilson E.
Overseas Secretary Holt.
Party Funds Organiser Price.

COMMITTEES: - Ballot Frances, Gross & Brown.
 Editorial Gilmac, Hardy and Waite.
 Finance Hampson, Holt and Price.
 Premises Howard, Kersley and Lake.
 Propaganda Groves, Millen and Young.
 Publicity Milborne and Wilson M.
 Social Cash, Leight, Wilson E. and Wilson M.
 1942 Conference ... Cuthbertson, Humphreys, Judd,
 McLaughlin and Young.
 Book Dept. Law, Russell and Wright.
 On method of appointment of Full-Time
 Propagandist Holt, Price and Waite.

ORDER OF BUSINESS.

- Item 1. Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman.
- Item 2. Election of Tellers.
- Item 3. Report of Standing Orders Committee.
- Item 4. Report of 39th Executive Committee.
- Item 5. Amendments to Rules.
- Item 6. Resolutions.
- Item 7. Items for Discussion.
- Item 8. Other Business.